

2017 Massachusetts Community Transportation Coordination Conference Pedestrian Safety for Seniors and People with Disabilities

Presenters

- Meg Robertson, MCB
- Adi Nochur, WalkBoston
- Bruce Bernstein, Egremont Council on Aging

Facilitator

- Sheryl Leary, HESSCO Elder Services

Age Friendly Walking and Pedestrian Safety; Adi Nochur – WalkBoston

- Over 100 communities in MA; pedestrian safety, walkable communities, DPH active transportation. Focus: how do you improve the environment for all users?
- Age-friendly – for seniors
 - Sidewalk conditions
 - ADA compliance
 - Benches
 - Lighting
 - Traffic speed; communities can lower speed limit to 25 mph. (12 communities state wide to date)
- Case studies
 - Williamsburg: Healthy Aging and community design
 - Boston
- Williamsburg
 - Walk assessments, local residents, municipal staff, agencies
 - Existing conditions, traffic conditions, crosswalks, what is working/what is not
 - PV planning commission, built-in environment and walkability
 - Downtown: drive 300 feet to store to store; how to make it more walkable?
- Boston
 - Age-friendly Boston
 - Age friendly cities
 - Listening tour for seniors concerns; improving walkability- conditions of crosswalks,
 - WalkBoston & Elderly Commission/Age Friendly Boston
 - Pilot neighborhoods: 2016-2018- three pilot neighborhoods
 - East Boston, South End, Mattapan Sq.
 - Equity; racial economics, economic demographics
 - South End: Walk audit, Mass Ave into South End.
- Next Steps
 - Work with city agencies, and communities.
 - Work with agency partners to create processes for citywide action items.
 - How do we transform the built in environment
- Walkability is critical to physical and economic mobility.
- Age friendly walking and healthy aging; diverse stakeholders. Brings community together.

- Directly addressing needs of vulnerable populations; equals safety for everyone.

Pedestrian safety for Seniors and People with disabilities; Meg Robertson – MCB

- MCB- established in 1906. Earliest disability state agency in the country.
 - 6 regional offices in MA. Statewide
 - 26,000 individuals legally blind registered with agency
- Orientation and Mobility
 - The ability to know where you are and where you want to go; whether you're moving from one room to another or walking downtown to a shop.
 - The ability to move safely, efficiently and effectively from one point to another.
- MCB rehab model has included this since 1960's.
- Travel training to individuals. No one should be driving (room chuckles)
- 7 certified O&M certified specialists
- Also contract with Carroll Center for the Blind for additional COMS staff.
- 1,300 consumers ages 18-100+ throughout the state.
- Training takes place where the individual needs is
 - Human guide
 - Wayfinding and navigation skills
 - Inside travels
 - Trailing skills
 - Long care training or ID cane.
 - Outdoor travel;
 - non-visual pedestrian skills
 - street crossing skills
 - training people to use transit
 - different transportation options
 - sunglass evaluations
- Street Crossing Skills
 - Walk to street crossing,
 - locate edge of street
 - identify when is best to cross
 - Maintain line when crossing
 - Monitor traffic during crossing.
 - Recognize end of crossing.
- Advocacy
 - Local transportation agencies
 - Public works departments
 - Traffic/street departments
 - Public utility districts
 - State or local pedestrian & bicycle coordinator
 - Transit Authorities
 - School Admin
- Sidewalk Issues
 - Repair
 - Use of bricks
 - Accessible sidewalk routes from main sidewalk to buildings

- Lack of snowplowing and sanding
- Overhang/Brush
- Street furniture
- Signage location; focused on traffic, not pedestrians. Shielded from car sight
- Lack of Accessible Pedestrian Signals and Detectable warnings
 - Sound signals
 - Curb cuts; lack of put blind pedestrians at risk
- Construction barricades
 - Stable continuous and have rails (top and bottom).
- Complex Intersection Designs
 - Actuated intersections
 - Right on Red (!!)
 - Left/Right protected turns
 - No APS

Bruce – Be Safe/Be Seen

- Chair of Egremont council on aging
- AGE triad southwest Berkshires
- Frequent accidents, no discussions post accident.
 - 3 years ago, crossing route 7 (Sheffield/Great Barrington)
 - Senior Housing to a grocery store.
 - Driver “never saw him”
 - Scooter was painted black, wearing dark clothing.
 - Local politicians and police turning to us to come up with a solution.
- Improve the situation
 - Be Seen/Be Safe.
 - \$500 local hospital funding,
 - Fluorescent vests, \$5 each (100 pieces)
 - Senior center picnic
 - Decorate scooters; rod/flag installation, reflective tape.
 - Promote visibility to seniors in Great Barrington
 - “The most positive initiative ever done”
 - Event in June; more organizations.
 - Banks, churches
 - Placed a pile of fluorescent vests in police cruisers
 - If they see someone walking, they are given a vest to use; advised to walk facing traffic.
 - Placed in local B&B’s for tourists.
- Bruce bicycles regularly from Great Barrington to Sheffield.
 - Never spotted police cruisers who do not stop for crosswalks.
 - Route 7 (owned by state of MA; town of Great Barrington)
 - Painted crosswalks pink (not legal)
 - “Look, Smile, and Wave!” initiative
 - Lack of ownership of Route 7.
- 30 accidents in area of recent fatality in the last 5 years.
 - No police inhibiting and stopping traffic in the intersection.

Q&A

- After the assessment; who is following up with maintenance regarding speed limits, etc.
 - Walk assessments done; can crosswalks be repainted; review of physical infrastructure of the intersection.
 - Write up of recommendations to local community (report or memo)
 - Obstacles: fiscal budgets, authorizations.
 - Look to the local partners to continue to monitor and follow up and communicate with WalkBoston if necessary.
 - “Crash” and not accident. Accident implies it was inevitable. How can WE design roads and infrastructure so we can avoid crashes, “Vision Zero”; framework that pushes to reduce traffic fatalities and seriousness to zero? Educate, enforcement strategies, reviewing site of crashes. State-wide coalition to bring Vision Zero across the state.
 - MassDOT “Complete Streets” program;
 - Funding towards intersection infrastructure
 - 1 year application process
- WRTA sees issues with a lot of tree roots along sidewalks.
 - 311 systems to report it.
 - Take photos with cellular phone (plus mobile app in Worcester area)
 - Record and await response.
 - Maybe be DPW, may be street engineer. Depends on community.
 - State system (511?) to report complaints
- BRTA, COA – great feedback on Be Seen/Be Safe campaign. Have other agencies jumped on board to participate?
 - When is the event in June? June 21st (?) at senior center at noon.
 - AGE triad, crash occurred in Sheffield.
 - Welcome the community to address safety (common issue)
 - Next vest program: Mount Washington
 - Active participants willing to contribute.
- Interested in mobility of youth, how often are children integrated into the same initiatives as seniors?
 - Walk Boston: 8 to 80 cities; capturing everyone in between.
 - Making the city safe for everyone.
 - MCB: If you make a city safer for someone older; it is safer for everyone. Elder initiatives will make the city safer for everyone.
 - Will integrate and expand throughout the entire community
- Scott Ricker: Changing the culture is critical, getting the mindsets changed. “How we used to do it/We’ve always done it that way”
- WalkBoston walking tours; how are we including disabled people in initiative and design, how many involved in walking tours?
 - City of Boston commission participating in meetings, and on city walks. Signal timing, curb ramps accessible, warning panels.
 - Worcester: design of intersections, critical that disabled participate
 - How often are apex curb cuts an issue? Not very helpful to visually impaired in regards to navigating which direction to cross.
 - Usually infrastructure issues, and cost savings initiatives.
 - Also does not require cars slow on run on red intersections.
 - Are audio signals helpful?

- It depends on the intersection, if it cannot be heard on both sides. Normally set up too loud. Sound should carry only 8 feet from the signaling pole.
- When WalkBoston reviews crosswalks, who do you report that to? Communities usually do annual or semi-annual repainting
 - 311 is often utilized
 - Boston Transportation department usually responds with re-striping. May sometimes encounter a time lag.
 - Try to follow up as much as possible. Rely on local community to respond and rectify.
- MCB: Does MCB report any lack of crosswalks?
 - MCB will report it as individual instructors, as well as the consumer reporting it.
 - Works closely with traffic engineers.
- Can any funding be diverted for crosswalks?
 - Chapter 90; spend money on roads, or crosswalks and intersections?
 - Varies based on the community.